LOVE SHALL NOT
FORGET ITS OWN

A Thesis
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"Let us put it thus: a conception which is of the spirit, and therefore significant, is so because it reaches beyond itself to become the expression and exponent of a larger conception, a whole world of feeling and sentiment, which, whether more or less completely, is mirrored in the first, and in this wise, accordingly, the degree of its significance measured. Further, the love felt for such a creation is in itself "significant": betraying something of the person who cherishes it, characterizing his relation to that broader world the conception bodies forth—which, consciously or unconsciously, he loves along with and in the thing itself."

Thomas Mann
The Magic Mountain

"... he pronounced, 'Mon Dieu! how the time passes!' Nothing could have been more commonplace than this remark; but its utterance coincided for me with a moment of vision. It's extraordinary how we go through life with eyes half shut, with dull ears, with dormant thoughts. Perhaps it's just as well; and it may be that it is this very dullness that makes life to the incalculable majority so supportable and so welcome. Nevertheless, there are moments of awakening when we see, hear, understand ever so much - everything - in a flash - before we fall back again into our agreeable somnolence."

Joseph Conrad
Lord Jim
The paintings which constitute the final phase of my work as a graduate student are paintings which concern themselves with silence, light, and those feelings in art which appear to persist beyond the limitations of the present. Time, space and self are questions which have worked in and out of my various paintings. What follows is an attempt to speak about my paintings and critically evaluate their ability to align themselves with my ideas and influences. This may perhaps shed some insight to the intended content of my work.

Light is one of the principal carriers of a painting's atmosphere. Light illuminates what we see both by its incandescence and elucidation of deeper meaning. Often light suggests to us time. This suggestion relates psychologically to specific moods. These moods, brought out through light and time, adhere to various moments of our perception of life. Light and time have then a curious symbiotic relationship. It is this quality of interconnection which draws upon our sense of late afternoon melancholia in a de Chirico painting. Long shadows and stark contrast have a capacity to inform our subconscious of the end of the day, closure and even death. In much the same manner, space is also connected to light and time. Lighted interior spaces convey feelings of intimacy, isolation and/or chaos. Often our perception of time and space are suspended in art. Frames of references and moments are drawn out and situated for contemplation. These qualities are just as strongly evident in abstract art.
An example such as Mark Rothko's paintings give us time, space, and light as being felt or suggested through non-objective shapes.

It is the metaphorical or implied sense of light which I value as having the greatest degree of importance. When light is pushed beyond its mere expelling of darkness, it begins to take on the quality of elucidation of the interior of objects. It acts as a ray from within while functioning to light the actual form. Rembrant's paintings are examples of what I am referring to as well as the work of Vermeer. Vermeer's paintings penetrate deeply into the shadows and reflections of interiors (occasionally exteriors) where individuals quietly go about their ordinary activities. He does not appear to be a manipulator of his subject; yet he describes with great feeling what he is experiencing in his present world. There is clarity and order in his paintings, a harmony of form and feeling. Vermeer has taken the ordinary language of a lighted room and given it a new realm of being. What is fleeting and temporal is now sustained and open for contemplation. His paintings suggest a moment when life breaks away from its normal patterning and is given over to new, clear seeing. We have a flash of insight into the hidden recess of joy beneath the surface of the familiar. This is the quality of light that I am concerned with, which is a way of seeing into the core and soul of the subject. When I use the term light it should be understood to mean
this latter definition. It is the poetic vision as contrasted to the analytic: elucidation as opposed to incandescence.

The poet Rainer Maria Rilke spoke about his writing as an attempt to go a "few notches deeper, where silence reigns." Anyone familiar with Rilke's writings may agree that there are times when his writing does indeed achieve this purpose. I believe Vermeer's paintings communicate this same presence. This direct apprehension of the form of a thing in and of itself in silence is what John Keats called "negative capability." Gerard Manley Hopkins termed it "inscape," brought on by "instress." It is a tilting of one's head that matters here. Listening. Apprehending what is not the absence of noise but the moment of contact with the core. It is relationship. When I perceive the light of the object I perceive it in full participation of a silent stasis. My sense of real time and real space have dropped away and I am left with the experience of a thing (person, mood, idea, etc.) beyond the backdrop of the categories of description. This is most always a flash, an ineffable moment of communication.

Morandi achieved this kind of understanding and communicated it through his paintings. I perceive his paintings of bottles as being much more than bottles. They are a refined exchange of the emotion felt in the painting of the bottles for the ontology the actual objects possess with regard to their existence as something for which we have names. He
achieved this through repeated contact to the simplicity of the bottle forms. He painted them over and over again until they passed from being mere bottles to a point where the painted line as space around the bottle is charged with the painter's quiet understanding. When we look at Morandi's paintings, we realize that it is absurd to discuss his work from an analytic view. They are about the poetry that J. Maritain has defined as the "intercommunication between the inner being of things and the inner being of the human self . . ." I remember reading Van Gogh's response to the Japanese masters' ability to paint the entire world into a single bamboo leaf. Mu-chi's "Six Persimmons" is a painting possible only when there is meditation and commitment to this poetic silence. With this as an introduction to my ideas and influences, it seems appropriate to discuss the works themselves.

My paintings have been an attempt to move towards a center where silence and light are realized. The artists discussed above have greatly influenced my work. The idea of still life painting seemed to offer a way in which I could objectify my personal expression. I believed that what was essential in me as a person would gradually emerge regardless of the motif of art used (yes, I have great faith). The light entering a window which throws shadows across the kitchen table has more than once held my attention for a suspended period of time. I gathered a small quantity of
objects from my parents' home. I painted several objects repeatedly until one in particular held my attention. This object was a small stone lamb. Its function was primarily a decorative capping to the graves of small children. My grandparents found the object in a trash heap. It was appealing so they held onto it. I had made several drawings and paintings of this object before settling on it as a good form to paint. James Joyce had said that any object contemplated for a long while can be a window to the universe. I place hope in that statement. It is possible that any object could fulfill this function. I chose the lamb through chance. I liked its off-white marble color. The image of a gentle lamb quietly at rest contained its own sense of beauty. All the symbology which accompanied the object was accepted by me. (I should say that it was not my intention to exploit this dimension of the figure.) I needed something to paint, something to act upon as a type of narrator. This object, susceptible to its own mood and play of atmosphere, was right for this need.

As I painted the image over and over again, I experimented with various changes. These changes began as variations of color and perspective. I gradually came to prefer the colors inherent to the object. I wanted to paint the lamb better at each turn. I was looking to move the painting of the image to a plane equal to the actual object. I took greater care to record every shade and nuance on its surface.
Only through such extended concentration could the image enter the full range of being with all things in the world. I believe this to be the case because paint transforms the image, as well as substantiates an object's essence. I was looking to offer up an interpretation of the object that would contain the level of intimacy I had with the object. The changes which occurred were subtle. The head of the object would change, the length of the object, relationship to parts, and overall volume would be altered somewhat on each rendition. These were all instances of accident. To know which accidents to sustain and which to retouch depended a great deal on my concentration of the qualities of light and silence as described above. The painting process is a slow activity of establishing a harmonious relationship of all the parts. Persistent critical evaluation allows for the right balance of the formal properties to be maintained. Despite this understanding, many of these paintings were rushed. The lamb as central image became constant, while the painting as a whole included variation. The variables which emerged in response to the rigidity of the image were the overall shape of the painting, the interior ground on which the lamb was placed, and the scale of the paintings in general.

All paintings are shapes. There is indeed no object that exists that does not in some way embrace the categorical notion of shape. The issue of shape became augmented when
shapes other than squares and rectangles were introduced. The first such shape to emerge was an oval with a curved surface. The origin of this idea is linked to the portraits of people done on tiles which are embedded on grave stones. In addition to this I had seen a painting in a friend's house which was an oval, curved plane. I remember then wanting to paint this idea out in some way. When I changed the shape to an oval from a rectangle, the issue of the "objectness" of the painting became more crucial. A painting occupies a certain amount of space. It extends itself in many directions as much as any object. My first experience with this issue demonstrated my weak grasp of this problem. The lamb as an image which acted as a subject came into conflict with the problem of the overall "objectness" of the painting. These early oval paintings were awkward inchoate works. Their novel form could not sufficiently sustain them through their inconsistency of information.

It was not until I considered changes within the ground of the interior painting that this problem became reconciled. This occurred when I introduced cloud formations into an oval (Plate 1). Up until this time, the grounds were primarily flat, ambiguous color fields which caused the lamb image to float somewhere within the space of the painting. As a result the paintings suggested no depth or space to qualify or push the lamb beyond its own level of information. The scale of the image was exactly as it appeared. When the
cloud forms were introduced this assumption dropped away and
the notion of the lamb's scale became more complex. The
lamb as image occupied a more defined space which, despite
the affectual landscape forms, moved the object into a new
point of consideration. I proceeded to execute paintings
that were preconceived before any materials were introduced.
I considered this a mature direction. My ideas were for the
first time linked to objects which attempted to give them
form. I would now like to discuss some of these paintings
and suggest what lead to certain decisions.

I had seen a large white house at dusk with its shadow
extending across a snowy field. There was a peacefulness
about this image. The memory of that image persisted for
a long while. It began to solidify in my mind as poten-
tially becoming a painting. I set the idea into a small
rectangle with a length about three times the height (Plate
2). I replaced the house with the image of the lamb and
reduced the snowy field to a benign white horizon. I at-
ttempted to reconstruct the glance which took hold and planted
itself within me. For a brief instant the house stood apart
from the things around it. I had seen dozens of houses and
equal dozens of fields. What separated this particular frame
from all others might have something to do with the work done
prior to this experience. The earlier paintings used an
ambiguous ground, where the lamb sculpture sat on a white
table. I used a low angle spotlight on the image which
extended its shadow dramatically across the table. It would seem likely that the relationship to seeing this formation on the actual horizon was made meaningful because I had pre-determined its impact, unknowingly, on my subconscious.

When I was determining the dimensions of this painting, I decided to emphasize the relationship of lamb to shadow. This made use of the sharp angular form in contrast to the softly painted lamb.

The lamb sculpture never moved a very great distance from my easel. I had considered making a painting that would work with a great transition of space within a relatively small field of vision (Plate 3). To accentuate the close proximity of the lamb, I placed the object on a cloth. The painting would then move with great depth into a space which would emerge as cloud formations occupying the upper portion of the picture plane. I set this image within the context of a shape emblematic of Gothic windows or doorways. This shape is reminiscent of the passage or vector of which the structure is spiritually reflective. The very presence of the shape carries the connotation of "mediating" to some beyond. I especially became fond of the cloud images in this particular painting, for they are most like the nocturnal quality which intrigued me with the art of Albert P. Ryder. I enjoyed the sense of mystery this painting conveyed. It had a feeling of Poe's The Raven where some sceptor from the other world has descended to deliver a cryptic message to the
viewer.

The images of liturgical art have also been of long-standing interest. I hesitate to invoke the term "icon" because it has a sense of misuse and ubiquitous encounter in today's art jargon. I believe few things actually merit this particular title. It seems hardly possible that one should start with the intention of making an "icon" when the true sacredness of an object emerges over a period of time. My paintings are very personal. The term personal might seem "iconic" merely because it involves a system of embodying self-relevant values. But I do not wish for my paintings to suggest a need for this decoding process. What I have said earlier in this paper approximates my intentions much clearer than the idea of a personal symbology. I actually do not see why I think another should care if I should pursue this route. True iconic art has impressed me greatly. The scale and care of these objects give them a unique presence. I decided to make a painting that had the intricate shape that many objects had from the late medieval period. The shape I chose was a semicircle intersecting with a rectangle (Plate 4). I wanted a type of vault in which to paint the sky of this painting. It was intended to be housed in much the same manner that is evident in a church or cathedral ceiling. I painted an interior frame within the picture frame to give the appearance of a passage. This passage is derived from nativity structures. It sets the viewer as one inside
looking out. The viewer sees the posts and arched beams as the limit of their peripheral vision. The lamb was to be painted just outside the opening. I shifted the posts and arch slightly off center for two reasons. One was my desire to create parallel lines at the left and right ends of the painting. The uneven thickness of these bars force the positioning of the lamb to balance out visual tension. It would also throw the relationship between the symmetrical shape of the painting as object in contrast to the asymmetrical painting on the surface. The lamb is outlined with a haze to give it a luminous contrast to the dark field that extends to the range of mountains.

The painting which most successfully unites the relationship between lamb image and sky was the final painting completed for my thesis exhibition. This painting was a semicircular shape having the lamb occupy the center. This position suggests that the lamb is extended into the air as if resting on a plinth or pedestal (Plate 5). I wanted to make a painting that expressed a feeling of glorification. One evening, while driving home, I was taken by the beautiful play of clouds and light. The spectacle of clouds reminded me, in color and shape, of the lamb. I could almost imagine the lamb within those clouds. I chose the semicircle to be a form suitable to a ground composed largely of sky. This curve is a type of cliché for the dome of the universe. I decided in this instance clichés were suitable. The ground
below the sky is a stark, flat dark horizon to present the feeling of deep, evening water. This painting, perhaps more than any other work, held its own at a great distance. In this painting I painted the clouds and lamb with the same degree of care. As a result the closure of image and atmosphere merge in harmony more successfully than any other painting.

The scale of these paintings is important for its capacity to beckon as opposed to confront. Mirrors are situated to define our reflected visage. These paintings are in this way more like mirrors than windows because of their relationship to a viewer's face. The scale of a painting should always be a major concern. As I alluded to earlier, my paintings have a slight deception through their size. At first approach they appear to be small and vulnerable to a large space. In actuality these paintings require as much space as larger, more confrontive paintings. What this does is refer back to the issue of silence. Minute and personal utterances require a spatial level of quietness in which to experience them. The special necessities of my paintings increase the notions of unoccupied space, emptiness and silence.

My paintings are not the finest example of the qualities I value highest in an artwork. The limitations of my paintings need not negate my belief in art's capacity for rarefication and expansion of our spiritual perceptions.
Becoming centered and open to the creation and reception of this deeply felt, silent presence in art is a matter of continuous relationship to the things which "body forth" the essence. We must constantly renew our expectations as well as our faith. My primary hope has been that my work might touch the center of another in such a way as to open their awareness to a realm of being which stands apart from their defined world. The instant our awareness of time and space drops away is a moment when the beautiful hurts. I believe this pain amongst joy is a type of grieving. It is a sorrow for a moment, a glimpse of our most natural intended self. We are never comfortable within the brackets of time. We always sense time's presence as a kind of intrusion to our blissfulness. The passing of time is never long enough or quick enough to blend with our interior selves. I believe this to be equally true with regard to space. Our sense of space and place are matters of our spirit. Most often our feeling is not one of contentment with our self proximity but more a feeling of alienation and loneliness. There is a great deal of jargon thrown about to indicate our persistent desire to move outside of our own bodies and connect up with something which will enlarge ourselves and break the diminution of being. Yet I feel most complete in those experiences where any notions of time and space are absent. Art (as well as love, faith and several high expressions of relationship) points toward a place which is a taste of home. I might best
define my activity as an artist as that which seeks to undermine those things which seek to undermine my truest being. These things are true so far as they define what I have thought about and experienced. These things which I have spoken of are not an obvious reality. Their presence and believability are like faith in God or love in another person, both of which are carried by a "fragile testimony" of one person to another. There is always a need for the creation of vessels to embody and pass on this testimony. My deepest hope is, as I have said through several instances, that my work might approach this point of being such a vessel. Love shall not forget its own.